

Montana Creditable Food Guidance

Montana Child and Adult Care Food Program



Version 2

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References: 7CFR Part 226 CACFP, Crediting Foods in the Child and Adult Care Food Program- Revised August 2001 and April 2008, Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2010, USDA Memo CACFP 21-2011, Infant Policy MT CACFP 2001-5 Rev 3, Infant Meal Pattern, and FNS-258 Feeding Infants A Guide for Use in the Child Nutrition Programs. For day care homes, the Minute Menu Montana Food List.

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Welcome to the Montana Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)!

The goal of Montana CACFP is to serve nutritious food to support the health of participants.

Introduction

The Creditable Food Guidance allows you to check which foods count toward the CACFP Meal Pattern and review frequently asked questions. This guide is not all inclusive. Each of the meal component sections provides a definition of what is creditable (what counts as a meal component), what is not creditable and list of frequently asked questions. This document will be revised periodically as new questions arise.

The guidance is divided into sections which correspond to the CACFP Meal Pattern components:

- milk
- fruits and vegetables
- grains and breads
- meat and meat alternates



Key Concept: There must be enough of an ingredient in a dish to be credited as a meal component. For example: Bread crumbs in meatloaf is not creditable as a bread component because there is not enough breadcrumbs in the product to count towards a serving size.

Crediting Combination Dishes: A combination dish may have up to three meal components credited/counted toward the CACFP meal pattern. 1) Meat/Meat Alternate 2) Grains/Breads 3) Fruits/Vegetables (*Count as one component only, even if 2 or more F/V are served in one dish.*)

If you have further questions or clarifications about foods served in your business, please contact the State agency if you are a center or your sponsoring organization if you are a family or group day care home. State agency toll free number: 1-888-307-9333.

Infants

Infants are defined as ages 0-12 months of age. Infant milk is the mainstay through the first year. Solid food is introduced according to the parents feeding instruction, when the infant is developmentally ready, and by 12 months of age is being graduated to the regular child care menu.

Creditable Infant Milk: Breast milk and iron fortified infant formula, milk and soy based, is creditable. All purchased infant formula sold in stores meet the FDA iron fortification requirements, unless labeled otherwise. All other infant milks require a special dietary statement. For breastfed infants one year of age and older, breast milk is a substitute for cows milk without having to submit a medical statement. Mothers can provide breast milk for babies as they wish. Whole milk is creditable for infants 12 months to 24 months.

Non-creditable Infant Milk: For infants less than 12 months of age, all milks other than breast milk and iron-fortified infant formula is not creditable. Refer to FNS-258 *Feeding Infants* or contact the State agency or sponsoring organization. For infants 12 months to 24 months, non-fat, low-fat, and reduced fat milk is not creditable.

Creditable Infant Cereal: Iron fortified infant cereals, single and mixed grain, sold in stores meet the FDA iron fortification requirements.

Other Foods: Foods rich in nutrition and low in added salt, sodium, and preservatives is the goal for infant food. Homemade foods are ideal and can be modified, in texture and consistency, to meet infant feeding needs. Homemade and commercial foods (exceptions of combination and dessert foods) are creditable. Be wary of baby/toddler products on the market which can be more expensive but no different than other foods. Compare jarred baby applesauce to regular applesauce. Creditable foods listed in this document apply to infant foods, however there are non-creditable foods specific to infants under 12 months of age.

Non-Creditable Foods for infants under 12 months: Please consult Infant Meal Pattern and FNS-258 *Feeding Infants: A Guide for Use in the Child Nutrition Programs*. Day care homes may refer to the Minute Menu Montana Food List. Consult the State agency or your sponsoring organization as needed.

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Definitions:

Creditable Food

Food that may be counted toward meeting the components for a reimbursable meal. A meal must contain creditable foods in the amounts noted in the CACFP meal pattern.

Food items have been determined to be creditable based on the following factors:

- nutrient content
- function of the food in a meal
- if the food fits into the CACFP meal pattern
- if the food meets Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) standards and policy.

Non-Creditable Food

Food items that do not count toward the CACFP meal pattern requirements and do not meet FDA and USDA standards and policy, as well as State agency policies. However, some non-creditable foods (but not all) may supply additional nutrients and add color, taste and texture to meals. Condiments are not creditable but are acceptable in moderation. Serving homemade condiments, such as dips and salad dressings, is recommended.

CACFP Meal Pattern

The CACFP meal pattern is a tool used to plan well balanced, nutritious meals. The CACFP Meal Pattern is a set of required meal components with the required minimum quantities noted for breakfast, supplement (snack), lunch, or supper for a specific age group of children.

Meal Components

Foods are grouped into categories according to the CACFP meal pattern. These categories are called meal components which are the following: milk, fruits and vegetables, grains/bread/bread alternates, and meat and meat alternates. Also referred to as food components.

Condiment

A sauce or seasoning, to add flavor to a food or dish. Some condiments are used during cooking while some are added after cooking. Barbecue sauce, soy sauce, marinade, salt, pepper, olive oil, relish, mayonnaise, salad dressing, mayonnaise, jelly, jam, preserves, butter, ketchup, maple syrup, and dips are examples. Condiments are non-creditable. Serving homemade condiments, such as dips and salad dressings, is recommended.

Combination Foods

Any food that contains two or more, but no more than three, of the required meal components.

USDA Food Buying Guide

A resource to assist in determining the amount of food to be prepared to serve the correct serving size for the number of children/staff served.

FDA Standards of Identity

The ingredients a food must contain to be labeled by a common product name. All foods must have a Standards of Identity to be creditable, as set by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

Serving Size or Portion

The weight, measure or number of pieces or slices specified in the CACFP meal pattern for each child.

Medical Exceptions

Food substitutions may be made for medical or dietary reasons when supported by a special dietary statement from a recognized medical authority. The statement should specify the food or foods to be avoided and a choice of foods that may be substituted.

Child Nutrition (CN) Label

The CN Label is a voluntary Federal labeling program that allows manufacturers to state on the label how the product contributes to the CACFP meal pattern.

A CN Label is not an endorsement to use the food product. Not all CN-labeled foods are creditable in the Montana CACFP. The CN Label does not indicate a higher quality or a more nutritious food product. For more information on CN Labels refer to the Food Buying Guide. Contact the State agency office if you have questions about food products with a CN Label.

Product Specification Sheet

Information obtained from the manufacturer with a detailed explanation of what the product actually contains and the amount of each ingredient in the product by weight. It can be used to verify a product's contribution to the meal pattern components. Also known as the Product Analysis Sheet.

United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)

The Federal agency that funds Child and Adult Care Food Program.

Milk

The CACFP meal pattern requires fluid milk to be served for breakfast, lunch and supper. Fluid milk may also be served as one of the two components of a snack. Refer to the CACFP meal patterns for minimum serving size requirements.

The definition of milk in CACFP:

To be creditable, milk must be pasteurized and meet State and local standards for fluid milk. Examples include skim milk (fat free), low-fat milk (1%), reduced fat (2%) whole milk, fat-free or low-fat lactose reduced milk, fat free or low-fat lactose free milk, fat free or low fat acidophilus milk or kefir, or fat free or low-fat cultured buttermilk may be served. Milk must be unflavored, plain.

Fluid milk recommendations by age group:

- Participants two years of age (24 months) and older must be served fat-free (skim) or low-fat (1%) fluid milk.
- Participants one year to two years (12 months to 24 months) of age, must be served whole milk.

At breakfast or snack, fluid milk can be served in a cup, on cereal or both.

At lunch and supper, a serving of fluid milk must be served in a cup.

At snack, if fluid milk is served in a cup, juice cannot be credited as the other component. Likewise, if juice is served, milk cannot be credited as the other component.



Non-Creditable milk includes flavored milk (i.e. chocolate, strawberry and vanilla) and added flavorings in any form, including hot cocoa (syrup or otherwise), eggnog, coconut milk, rice milk,

certified raw milk (non-pasteurized), evaporated milk, imitation milk, dry milk (all types), soy beverages/drinks, half and half, goat's milk, almond milk, and hemp milk. Milk is not creditable when used as an ingredient in cooking such as casseroles, cereals, soup, and pudding (i.e. homemade rice and bread pudding).

Please note: instant and pre-packaged pudding is not creditable. Ice cream, frozen yogurt and milkshakes are not creditable as fluid milk. Cheese and yogurt are not creditable as fluid milk. *Please note that yogurt and cheese are defined as Meat Alternates, please refer page 9 and 10.*

Medical Exceptions:

Milk substitutes/special provision milk, such as soymilk, are creditable when a special dietary statement is on file for food allergies or intolerances or dietary modification due to disabilities. Milk substitutes must be nutritionally equivalent to milk and meet the nutritional standards for fortification of calcium, protein, vitamin A, and vitamin D. You are welcome to contact the State agency or your sponsoring organization with questions regarding medical exceptions. Refer to Food Allergies and Intolerances Policy, MT CACFP 2002-4 Rev2

Accommodations:

Parents/guardians can request in writing, non-dairy milk substitutes that meet the milk substitute criteria above to accommodate a special dietary need not medical in nature. For example, the parents/guardians of a child following a vegan diet can submit a written request.

Reference: USDA Memo CACFP 21-2011

Questions and Answers about Milk

Q: Why is reconstituted dry milk not creditable as fluid milk?

A: Reconstituted dry milk does not meet the definition of milk. Dry milk may only be used for emergencies when the center is unable to obtain a supply of fluid milk on a continuing basis.

Q: If a child cannot have milk, can I still be reimbursed for breakfast and lunch?

A: Yes, if you have a signed special dietary statement from a recognized medical authority on file stating that the child should not be served milk. The statement must specify a substitute.

Q: Can the milk used in cooking, as an ingredient, count toward the milk requirement?

A: No. Fluid milk must be served in a cup as a drink, at lunch and supper. For breakfast and snack, milk may be served as fluid milk in a cup as a drink, on cereal, or both.

Q: Can milk be purchased directly from a farm?

A: Yes, it must be pasteurized fluid milk that meets state and local health standards. Contact a local sanitarian for more information before purchasing milk from a farm to assure state and local health standards are met.

Q: Can hot cocoa be served to meet the milk requirement?

A: No, this is a type of flavored milk.

Q: Can smoothies be served to meet the milk requirement?

A: Yes, if the smoothie is fruit and milk blended together, the fruit and milk portions maybe credited/count toward the meal pattern.

Q: It states that parents can write a written request to accommodate special dietary needs not medical in nature, am I required to purchase the substitutions?

A: Yes, such substitutions are at the option and expense of the center or day care home. If the substitute is expensive or difficult to purchase, you may choose to discuss this with the parent and ask them to supply it.

Q: What information must be in the written request to accommodate a special dietary need not medical in nature?

A: A written request with the date, the parent/guardians name and signature, the child's name, information that identifies and describes the medical or other special dietary need that restricts the diet of the child, and recommended substitute(s).

Fruits and Vegetables

Fresh, frozen or canned fruits and vegetables, including legumes (beans, peas and lentils) and 100% juice are creditable foods. Juice may be served only once a week. Foods commonly thought of as fruits and vegetables are creditable and include:

Fruits: apples, apricots, bananas, berries (all types- blueberries, boysenberries, raspberries, cherries, cranberries, huckleberries, strawberries), cantaloupe, cherries, dates, figs, grapes, grapefruit, honeydew, mandarin oranges, oranges, mangos, nectarines, papayas, peaches, pears, pineapples, plums, prunes, raisins, rhubarb, tangerines, rhubarb, watermelon and kiwi.

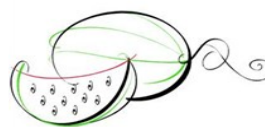
Vegetables: artichokes, asparagus, avocados, legumes (black beans, black eyed-peas, dried green and yellow peas, edamame, garbanzo beans/chick peas, great northern beans, green beans, lentils, lima beans, navy beans, peas, pinto beans, red kidney beans, soybeans, soy nuts, split peas, and wax/yellow beans), beets, bok choy, broccoli, brussel sprouts, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, celery, corn, cucumbers, eggplant, greens (all types; collards, mustard etc.), kale, lettuce (all types green, red, leaf, romaine), mixed vegetables, mushrooms, okra, onions, parsnips, peppers (green, red, orange, yellow), potatoes, rutabegas, radishes, spinach, squash (all types; zucchini, pumpkin, acorn, butternut, etc.), sweet potatoes, yams, tomatoes (all forms; fresh, stewed, and sauce), and turnips.

The CACFP meal pattern requires fruits and/or vegetables to be served for breakfast, lunch and supper. Fruits and/or vegetables may also be served as one of the two components for snack. Refer to the CACFP meal pattern for minimum serving size requirements.

Please Note: Two different fruit(s) and/or vegetable(s) must be served at lunch and supper.

Important: Juice may only be served once a week with the snack as a meal component.

Guidance: Offer fresh, frozen, canned or dried, fruits and veggies with little or no added sodium or sugar. Low-sodium canned soup may be served seldomly, however is not recommended. Home-made condensed soup is an alternative in classic casseroles.



Non-Creditable fruits and vegetables include fruit filling in fig bars and sweet pies; gummy style fruit snacks/roll ups; condiments such as jam, jelly,

preserves, relish, ketchup; and fruits and vegetables in breads such as banana bread and blueberry muffins. Pickles and olives are not creditable. Frozen pre-packaged potatoes of all types including but not limited to pre-cut, diced, hash browns, french fries, tator tots are not creditable. Potatoes that are canned and dehydrated (all forms, including instant mashed) are not creditable. Potato chips, popcorn, and pre-packaged cereal with fruit and/or dehydrated fruit or fruit flavoring (such as raisin bran, blueberry cereal, and fruit rings) are not creditable. Home-canned products are not creditable due to food safety concerns.

Please Note:

- At snack, a serving of fruits and/or vegetables or 100% juice may count as one of the two components for a snack. Two servings of fruits, vegetables, or juice cannot meet both components. For example, apple slices and celery sticks does not meet the meal component requirements for snack.

- Juice may only be served once a week at snack, as a meal component. Milk is served at breakfast, lunch and dinner; therefore juice is not served and not creditable. At snack, juice may not be credited/ counted as one of the components when milk is served as the only other component.

- To assure variety in meals, two forms of the same fruit or vegetable served at the same meal does not meet requirements.

- Cooked dried beans, peas and lentils can be counted as a meat alternate or a vegetable. However, one serving cannot be counted as a vegetable and a meat alternate in the same meal.

- At least 1/8 cup serving must be provided as a food or in a dish to count toward the total fruit and vegetable requirement. Very small amounts of fruits and vegetables as an ingredient, or added for flavor in mixed dishes do not count as a meal component because the quantity is too little, such as berries in muffins, chopped onion in soups or casseroles, and raisins in oatmeal.

Questions and Answers about Fruits and Vegetables

Q: Can mixed fruit or vegetables be used to meet the requirement of serving two or more fruits and/or vegetables at lunch and supper?

A: No, these items only count as one of the required servings.

Q: How are fruit and vegetables credited in combination dishes?

A: In combination dishes fruits and vegetables count toward one serving, even if more than one type of fruit or vegetable is an ingredient in the dish. For example, in beef soup, carrots and peas are considered as one vegetable serving; on a sandwich lettuce and tomato are considered as one vegetable serving. One exception is chef salad, the lettuce is considered one vegetable serving and the other vegetables on top, tomato, celery and cucumber is considered one vegetable.

Q: Are foods like coleslaw, potato salad, vegetable pasta salad, gelatin salad or Waldorf salad creditable?

A: Only the actual amount of the fruit and vegetable ingredient can be counted toward the fruit/vegetable requirement. Other ingredients such as mayonnaise, pasta, nuts, etc. cannot be counted in the serving size. For example, a 1/4 cup serving of vegetable pasta salad cannot be counted as a 1/4 cup serving of vegetable. The pasta could not be counted as a vegetable.

Q: How much tomato paste, tomato puree, or tomato sauce would I need to equal 1/4 cup vegetable for each 3-to-6 year old at lunch/supper?

A: Tomato Paste – 1 Tbsp. = 1/4 cup vegetable
Tomato Puree – 2 Tbsp. = 1/4 cup vegetable
Tomato Sauce – 4 Tbsp. = 1/4 cup vegetable

Q: Is the fruit and/or 100% juice added to gelatin (jell-o) salads creditable?

A: Yes, but at least 1/8 cup must be served in each serving to be creditable. Additional fruits and vegetables may need to be served to meet the serving size requirements.

Q: How do I know if juice is 100% juice?

A: The label will state 100% juice above the Nutrition Facts label. If the label states *cocktail*, *ade*, *beverage*, or *drink*, the item is not 100% juice.

Q: Are dried vegetables creditable and how are yields determined?

A: Yes, with the exception of dehydrated potatoes. Re-hydrate (add water or liquid) the dried vegetable product according to the manufacturers' directions and measure the re-hydrated volume. The re-hydrated product is what is measured and counted as a serving size.

Q: Are dried fruits creditable?

A: Yes. Please be aware that dried fruits might pose a choking hazard to young children. Provide the same serving size as fresh, frozen or canned fruit. Dried fruits are measured by volume, such as 1/4 cup.

Q: Are fruit smoothies creditable?

A: Yes, the fruit portion is creditable.

Q: Are frozen fruit and juice bars/popsicles creditable?

A: Yes, 100% fruit and juice bars/popsicles are creditable.

Q: How do I credit soup?

A: For homemade soup measure the vegetable or vegetables to see how many servings are in the soup. Add additional vegetables as needed, on the side or in the soup, to meet the CACFP meal pattern serving size requirements. For, condensed or ready-to-serve (canned or frozen), vegetable or vegetable w/meat or poultry takes 1 cup reconstituted to yield 1/4 cup of vegetables.

Q: It is noted that packaged french fries are not creditable, please clarify what type of potatoes are creditable.

A: Fresh potatoes in any form are creditable, baked (whole or cut), roasted or boiled.

Grains/Breads and Bread Alternates

Grains/breads include a large variety of whole grain and enriched products. Varieties include: breads (all types of bread products including corn-bread, stuffing, rolls, biscuits, english muffins, bagels, dumplings and fry bread), quick breads, flour (all varieties), cold and hot cereals (all types including oat, wheat, rice, corn, bran, and granola), grains (such as rice, barley, wheat berries, spelt and couscous), crackers, tortillas (such as corn and flour tortillas, and taco chips), noodles (all types of pasta noodles, macaroni, chow mien noodles, egg noodles, rice noodles, and vermicelli noodles), and baked goods.

There are many different types of crackers available. Whole grain and/or enriched crackers are creditable. Offer whole grain, low sodium crackers more often. Creditable crackers include graham crackers, animal crackers, seasoned herb crackers, and plain crackers, such as a saline type cracker. Homemade trail-mix (not containing pre-packaged snack products) and granola is recommended.

Baked goods include muffins, scones, gingerbread, fruit bread, granola bars, oatmeal cookies, pancakes, and waffles. Dough and crusts in savory recipes and products such as pizza, pasties, quiches and shepherd's pie, for example, are creditable. For baked goods, documentation demonstrating the primary ingredient is whole grain or enriched must be on file; appropriate documentation includes a recipe, product label, or CN label. For baked goods, documentation demonstrating the primary ingredient is whole grain or enriched must be on file; appropriate documentation includes a recipe, product label, or CN label.

The CACFP meal pattern requires grains/breads be served at breakfast, lunch, and supper. A serving of grains/breads may also be served as one of the two components of a snack. Serve a variety of forms and types of grains/breads.

Please Note: On-site-made cookies may be served seldomly; oatmeal cookies are preferred.

Guidance: Whole grain foods are recommended. Low sodium crackers, homemade trailmix and granola is recommended. Homemade oatmeal and low sugar cereals containing 6 grams or less of sugar per dry ounce is recommended (refer to the product nutrition label).

A recipe evaluation for homemade bread products can be used to determine the credibility of breads.

The food item must serve as *customary function* of bread in a meal, such as dinner rolls at lunch. The food item must be *recognizable integral part* of the meal, such as spaghetti, bread pudding, or dough and crusts.

Non-creditable grains/breads include products such as pre-packaged macaroni and cheese, toaster pastry products, potato chips, puffs of all types (ie. cheese or veggie puffs) highly sweetened cereals (such as Lucky Charms, Frosted Flakes, and Fruit Loops), ramen noodles, cake like muffins (purchased and pre-packaged), sweet rolls, doughnuts, cake, sweet bars (such as Rice Krispie squares and brownies), popcorn, hominy, tapioca, potato (potato is a vegetable, and not a bread/grain), shortbread, ice cream cones and sandwich wafers, dough and crusts of sweet pies, and all purchased cookies. Bread and bread alternates are not creditable when there's not enough in the product to count towards a serving, for example, breading on chicken strips.

Crackers with flavoring, such as cheese and chocolate flavoring are not creditable. Pre-packaged salted snack products, pretzels and trailmix, due to low nutritional value are not recommended.

Definitions

Flour is the product made by finely grinding and bolting (sifting) wheat or other grains. Flour includes all grains (wheat, rye, corn, etc.).

Whole-grain is the edible part of wheat, corn, rice, oats, rye, barley, (such as wheat, rice, oats, barley, bran, and wheat germ).

Enriched or *fortified* means that one or more nutrients lost during processing have been added back. When grains are refined (i.e. white bread), the bran and germ of the grain are removed and much of the fiber and many nutrients are lost.

To assure you are purchasing whole grains look for the word "whole" in front of the name of the grain and the first ingredient listed is whole grain. Such as whole wheat, whole barley, whole corn, and whole or rolled oats.

Questions and Answers about Grains/Breads and Bread Alternates

Q: Are sweet bars such as rice krispie bars and brownies creditable?

A: Sweet bars such as rice krispies and brownies are not creditable. However, if a bread or muffin recipe such as banana bread or muffins is served in bar form, it is creditable.

Q: Are granola bars a creditable bread alternate?

A: Yes. However, granola bars are not recommended because some varieties are high sugar and/or fat.

Q: Is granola cereal a creditable bread alternate?

A: Yes, however granola generally contains nuts, seeds, coconut, and dried fruit, which are not to be included when determining the serving size. Homemade or plain granola may be easier to credit.

Q: Are nut or seed flour considered to be a bread alternate?

A: No. Nuts and seeds do not meet the definition of grain/bread.

Q: Are purchased muffins from Costco creditable?

A: No. Costco muffins more like a cake-base. Muffins can be purchased in batter form or pre-made but always look for whole grain and muffins low in salt and fat.

Q: Can crackers be served as a bread alternate?

A: Yes. Plain crackers, without flavoring (i.e. cheese and chocolate flavoring) are creditable. Whole grain crackers and crackers low sodium crackers are recommended.

Q: Are pop tarts creditable?

A: No. Toaster pastry products such as pop tarts and toaster strudels are not creditable.

Q: Can dough and crust be credited as bread?

A: Yes, if the dough or crust is being served as an integral part of the meal, as in quiche and pasties. However, items such as doughnuts, pastries, shortbread, and dough and crusts of sweet pies are not creditable.

Q: Can batter-type and bread-type coating be creditable as a bread alternate?

A: Batter type coating is usually not credited as a bread alternate because there is not enough of the ingredient to be credited. Products that are thought of as pre-breaded and pre-packaged, such as chicken nuggets and fish sticks, are not creditable.

Q: Are homemade puddings creditable?

A: Yes, for example the bread in bread pudding and rice in rice pudding is creditable. Instant pudding and pre-packaged pudding is not creditable.



Meat and Meat Alternates

Meats include beef, chicken, pork (including ham), turkey, lamb, buffalo, and fish (fresh, frozen or canned fish is creditable) that are 100% meat. Meat must be from a licensed and approved source, manufactured by Federal and State agricultural food regulations, and must be USDA inspected. Cold cuts and sausages are creditable when served seldomly (choose lean sausages, sausage links are not recommended).

Creditable meat alternates include whole eggs, dry beans, dry peas, lentils, cheese, yogurt, nuts, seeds and their butters. Nut butters include but are not limited to hazelnut, sunflower, soy, almond, and sesame.

Creditable cheeses are natural cheeses including, but not are limited to cheddar, mozzarella, swiss, provolone, ricotta, feta, and cottage cheese. Yogurt and flavored yogurt are creditable at snack meals only.

Note: Dry beans and peas can be counted as a meat alternate or a vegetable. Dry beans and peas include: black beans, black-eyed peas, dried green/yellow peas, chickpeas, white beans/great northern beans, lentils, dried mature lima beans, navy beans, pinto beans, red beans/kidney beans, soybeans, soy nuts and split peas. Dry beans and peas can be purchased in dried form and cooked OR purchased as canned, cooked dried beans.

Dry beans do NOT include: green beans, string beans, baby green lima beans, edamame (fresh soybeans), yellow beans, and wax beans.

The CACFP meal pattern requires a meat or meat alternate to be served for lunch and supper. A serving of meat or meat alternate may be served as one of the two components of a snack. Refer to the CACFP meal patterns for serving size requirements.

Please Note: Yogurt and flavored yogurt are creditable as meat alternate at snack only.

Guidance: Serve a variety of meat and meat alternates, including fish, eggs, and beans as a main dish.

Non Creditable meat and meat alternates include products that are not 100% meat or the majority of product in this category is not 100% meat, such as hot dogs, frankfurters, corn dogs, fish sticks, and chicken nuggets. Spam, pepperoni and salami is not creditable. Imitation cheese, cream cheese, powdered cheese, cheese spread, Velveeta cheese, yogurt covering on fruits and nuts, and frozen yogurt is not creditable. Boxed macaroni and cheese is not creditable due to the powdered cheese/pre-packaged cheese having little nutritional value. American cheese is not considered natural cheese and is not creditable. Egg beaters and similar egg products and substitutes, imitation seafood, all types of bacon, including turkey bacon, are not creditable. Wild game, home slaughtered meat, home caught fish is not permitted and not creditable due to food safety concerns.

- Nuts and seeds may fulfill no more than one-half of the meat alternate requirement for lunch and supper. Nuts and seeds may fulfill the entire meat alternate requirement for a snack.

- When using more than one meat or meat alternate to fulfill the CACFP meal pattern requirements, a menu item must provide a minimum of 1/4 ounce of cooked meat or the equivalent of 1/4 ounce of meat alternate to meet any part of the meat and meat alternates requirement.

- Sausages and cold cuts (such as chicken, ham, roast beef, corned beef, and turkey) are creditable; however, are not recommended to be served often due to the high salt and high fat content. Sausage links are not creditable; choose leaner sausages.

- Cooked dried beans, peas and lentils can be counted as a meat alternate or a vegetable. However, one serving of dried beans or peas cannot be counted as a meat alternate and a vegetable in the same meal.



Due to allergies, extra caution must be given when serving peanut butter. Peanuts and tree nuts are creditable; however, they pose a high risk of allergies and choking hazard for children. Tree nut and peanut butter allergies tend to be very severe and have recently become more prevalent. Children may not have been introduced to foods containing nuts and/or peanut butter and introducing these food items may cause a severe allergic reaction, possibly anaphylaxis. Due to the many unknown factors and severity of the potential allergic reaction, CACFP recommends that peanut butter is served with caution and nuts should not be served in child care institutions. Be aware that nuts are a choking hazard to children.

Date last modified: September 1, 2011

Questions and Answers about Meat and Meat Alternates

Q: Can pizza be credited as a meat alternate?

A: Yes, if it is homemade (recipe on file) or a premade pizza with a CN label, or product specification sheet and contains the required amount of meat and/or meat alternates.

Q: Are meatless dishes creditable?

A: Yes. Examples of creditable meat alternates include natural cheese (*American cheese is not considered natural cheese*), cottage cheese, yogurt, eggs, fish, cooked dried beans, peas and lentil, nuts and seed butters or any combination of the above. See the CACFP meal pattern for more information.

Q: Is fish ok to eat due to mercury levels?

A: Yes. It is recommended for children to eat fish at least twice a week, and to eat fish low in mercury. The most commonly eaten fish or shellfish that are low in mercury are: shrimp, canned light tuna, salmon, pollock, catfish, cod flounder/sole, scallops, tilapia, clams, and crab.



Q: We have several children that attend our day care who cannot eat certain foods because of religious reasons. How do we claim these children on the food program?

A: If you substitute a creditable meat alternate (see question *Are meatless dishes creditable...*), you may claim these children in the same way you claim other children. If religious dietary restrictions require additional accommodation, please contact the state agency. Please refer to the HIPPA Policy, MT CACFP 2003-4 Rev 2.

Q: Are hot dogs that are 100% meat a creditable food?

A: No. Hot dogs, corn dogs, and frankfurters are not creditable. These products do not contain high quality protein.

Q: Are fish sticks or chicken nuggets creditable foods?

A: No. Homemade fish sticks and chicken nuggets/strips are creditable. Baked fish or baked chicken strips are alternative options to processed products.

Q: How are cups of commercially prepared yogurt containing fruit credited?

A: Commercially prepared plain and flavored yogurt satisfies the meat alternate requirement. Four ounces of yogurt fulfills the equivalent of one ounce of the meat alternate only.

Q: Is tofu, soy bean curd, or tempeh, fermented soybean?

A: No. There is no Standard of Identity for this product.